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IN MEMORIAM

The Veil Lifted Up

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149.





THE VEIL LIFTED UP;

A Sermon,

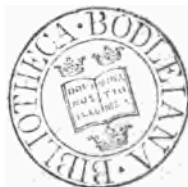
PREACHED AT ST. MARGARET'S, LOTHBURY,

FEBRUARY 20, 1871.

*BEING THE TUESDAY AFTER THE FUNERAL
OF CANON MELVILL.*

By DANIEL MOORE, M.A.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO THE QUEEN, AND VICAR OF HOLY TRINITY, PADDINGTON.

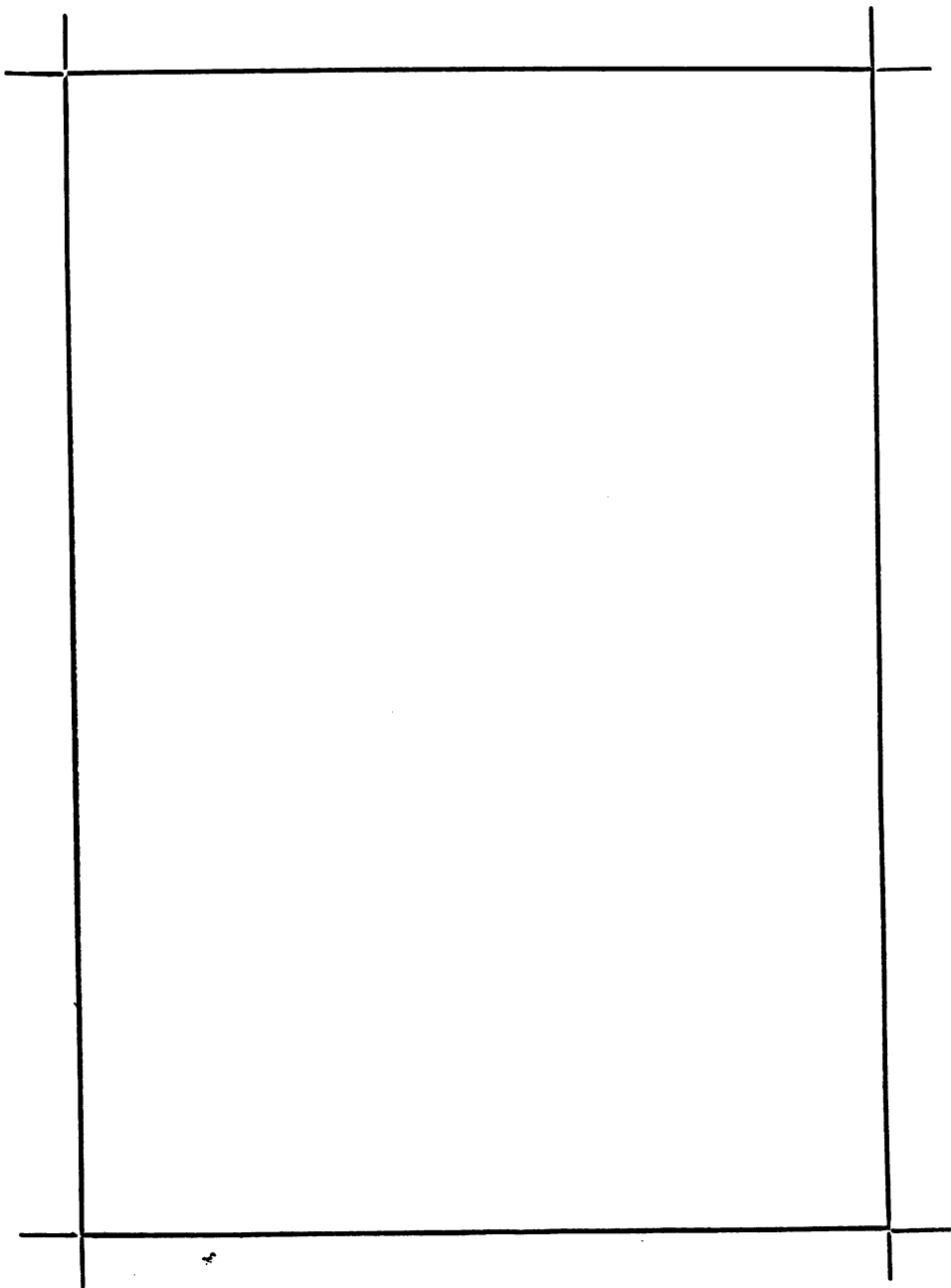


RIVINGTONS,

London, Oxford, and Cambridge.

1871.

100. v. 149.



A Tribute
OF
RESPECT FOR DEPARTED WORTH,
AND OF
SYMPATHY WITH SORROWING FRIENDS,
FROM
THE AUTHOR.

“ High as we may we lift our reason up,
By Faith directed, and confirmed by Hope ;
Yet are we able only to survey
Dawnings of beams and promises of day.
Heaven's fuller effluence mocks our dazzled sight,
Too great its swiftness, and too strong its light.”

Prior.

“HE GAVE HIS HONOURS TO THE WORLD AGAIN,
HIS BLESSED PART TO HEAVEN,—AND SLEPT IN PEACE.”

Shakspeare.

1 Cor. viii. 12 Part.

"For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."

THE Corinthians were a polished and highly-cultivated people ; and therefore, only from a man, himself of high intellectual attainments, would they take such an unmeasured disparagement and running down of worldly science as the Apostle displays in this epistle. But they knew him to be, in their own sense, able and learned, and conversant with all kinds of secular knowledge. *He* was no Galilæan fisherman. *He* was not a rough tax-gatherer, fresh draughted from the toll-booth. He could measure lances with the wise, and the scribe, and the disputer of this world. And yet he hesitates not to tell them that, with all their knowings, they know nothing—nothing perfectly, nothing thoroughly, nothing exactly as it is. Their illumination is mere reflected light after all. It is lantern-light, not sun-light ; an image of a thing, and not the thing itself. "For now we see through a glass darkly ; but then face to face."

You will recall the words as part of our epistle on Sunday. We need not perplex ourselves much about the metaphor—the double metaphor—the Apostle here employs to set forth

the limits of our human knowledge. By seeing "through a glass darkly," we naturally suppose the reference to be to a mirror, in which the object seems to be behind the surface looked upon. But even then we must have in our minds, not the polished looking-glass of modern times, but the rude metallic mirror of the ancients, in which the reflection was of the most dim and imperfect kind. And then, further, the object is said to be seen "darkly"—literally, "enigmatically"—or, as you have it in the margin, "in a riddle." This goes to make the dimness yet more dim ; to resolve all our science into parables, and problems, and vague conjectures. The supposition made is, that, given a part, we are to guess or make out the rest as we can. It is an outline which we are to fill up with colour ; a skeleton which we are to drape with life ; an allegory of which we are to find out the meaning. We have not the whole of truth put before us upon any subject ; but only broken or detached parts of it ;—something like those blocks of wood of which we make puzzles for children,—leaving them to find out how the pieces may be made to fit into some geometrical or pictured form. We see but in part, and that part not clearly. "For now we see through a glass darkly ; but then face to face."

The passage will lead us to consider the imperfection of OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE, compared with the fulness of that which shall be REVEALED HEREAFTER.

I. Our PRESENT KNOWLEDGE is imperfect,—meagre, inadequate, scanty, and that upon the most interesting subjects of human contemplation.

i. Thus, through what a dark and shaded glass are we obliged to contemplate GOD HIMSELF,—either in His nature, or in His attributes. We speak of Omniscience, Almightyness, eternity of being, spirituality of essence, as entering into the revealed characteristics of the Godhead: but yet these are things to be apprehended by us only through the medium of “a glass,”—a dull, bedimmed, metallic mirror. We use the expressions for these attributes. By frequent repetition, they have become the representative of certain ideas. But the ideas are not the true image of the things they express, but only the poor contrivances and conventions which the finite intelligence is obliged to put in their place. And the reason is that our present faculties are not equal to any near views of the nature of GOD. Dimness is the mind's relief. The seeing “through a glass darkly” keeps our eyes from being blinded by the confounding brightness. We cannot, with unshrinking gaze, look upon the sun in the heavens. What mental vision is strong enough to behold the Sun of righteousness,—to gaze on the face of Him whom no man hath seen or can see?

ii. Again, only “through a glass darkly” can we behold the *wonders of GOD in creation*. Mystery meets us every-

where in the scenes of external nature. There is not a department of physical science which does not present something to abate the pride of man's intellectual pretensions. What astronomer affects to know the number of the stars, or to define all the forces which act upon the heavenly bodies? What naturalist can explain all the processes of the vegetable kingdom, or trace the laws which govern the development of a single flower of the field? No: the chemist may torture nature with his fires, and the anatomist subdivide, to its minutest parts, the complex structure of our humanity. But there are ultimate facts in the constitution of things, at which Nature seems to take her stand, and say to the man of science "thus far shalt thou go and no further." "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" is the voice which comes to proud man from the whirlwind. "Declare, if thou hast understanding." Declare where is the way "where light dwelleth?" where is the womb which hides "the treasures of the snow?" what power "sets to the sea its bars and doors?" And who makes the track for the "lightning and thunder?" But there is no response to the challenge. "Touching the Almighty we cannot find Him out." "We know but in part."

iii. Furthermore, only "through a glass darkly" can we see the *ways of GOD in providence*. We are never able to comprehend fully the reasons of His dealings with nations

and communities. All history may be said to be a record of providential anomalies. We look in vain for any satisfactory reason why the cause of enlightened civilization should advance so slowly :—wherefore, as in the history of the past few months, events should be permitted on the European continent, which threaten to throw the interests of moral progress half a century behindhand :—why towns should be sacked, and fields should be wasted, and battalions should be mown down,—why “Death on the pale horse” should ride through the streets of the city, trampling under foot the decrepid, and the sick, and the delicate woman, and the little child ;—why gaunt Famine, careering on his black steed, and “with a pair of balances in his hand,” should be heard crying, “A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and see thou hurt not the wine and the oil.” No : the necessity for all this, in the present state, we shall never know. We can only silence conjecture by saying “Lo, these are parts of His ways.” We only know “the Lord reigneth :”—reigneth wisely ; reigneth righteously ; reigneth in the retired recesses of deep and unfathomable love. “He giveth no account of His matters.” Why should He ? “His time is not yet come.” “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” The disclosures will be more bright and glorious for having to be waited for. “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.”

II. But let us turn to the picture's brighter side, and consider how we shall look at things IN THE LIGHT OF THE FUTURE WORLD. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part: but then shall I know even as I am known." The expression "face to face" is an Orientalism to describe a condition of more perfect knowledge,—the removal of all the influences which lead to obscurity and doubt.

There are two ways in which we can conceive of an increase to our present amount of knowledge: that is, either by an increase in the measure of light vouchsafed to us, or an increase in our powers of apprehension to receive that light. I believe that the increase will take place in both directions:—that is, not only that there will be an indefinite enlargement of our field of moral vision, but also that there will be given to us new powers of intelligence, new faculties of discernment, new channels of perception—making us, in the penetration, and clearness, and comprehensive grasp of the glorified intellect, wise as the angels of GOD:—"For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face."

i. And on what subjects will these enlarged and clarified intellects be exercised? On all that could interest, and exalt, and ennoble a glorified and immortal spirit. "Face to face," we shall see GOD as He is:—that is, not "to perfection;"—angels cannot do *that*. But still, that which we shall see will

be a *real* object, as far as it is beheld at all ; and not a reflexion only ; not a mirage ; not an elaborate ideal conception, arrived at by means of looking "through a glass darkly." An element of these glorified faculties we are to have, will consist in a closer moral resemblance to the Divine nature. It is because we "are made like Him," the Apostle John teaches us, we "shall see Him as He is." Here lies the heart of the problem. It is only like which can see like :—only spirit which can comprehend spirit : only purity that can look on purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD :"—see Him "face to face :"—with His glories unveiled ; with His perfections in blended harmony ;—His whole moral administration without a flaw,—His throne without a cloud.

ii. Again, "face to face" we shall behold *the REDEEMER in His glory*. It was a part of His own precious prayer for us that we should do so :—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." We know the comfort of seeing the LORD Jesus now, when we can see Him only "through a glass darkly,"—with the quickened eye of faith, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. For we feel, in the exercises of devotion especially, that the glimpse, however imperfect, brings the object of our worship nearer to us. It relieves the mind in its gropings after an incorporeal abstraction. We

feel that, in the Incarnation, the Godhead is brought within the grasp of a reverent religious imagination. And when, through grace, we are enabled to say "this Lord is *my* Lord; this Jesus the Saviour is *my* Saviour; I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine,"—our hearts warm towards Him with all the sentiments of personal love, personal gratitude, the fervid glow of a holy and heavenly friendship. For how can we do otherwise than love Him who first loved us?

But what will be our feelings towards this Saviour, when we behold Him in His glory,—the uplifted centre of all homage, and worship, and honour, and praise? When we see Him in the full blaze and effulgence of His redemption triumphs,—beholding the stubborn hearts He has subdued by His grace; the subject worlds He has won by His atonement; the myriad throngs of celestial beings, all attributing to Him the glory of their salvation. And then for the risen saint to think within himself, that this All-glorious Being is He who, from the world of the ungodly, singled out *me*,—brought *me* under the power of His grace; pitied *my* weakness; wept for *my* blindness; with His loving corrections made *me* great; drew me with cords of love to His heart and throne; guided me by His counsel, and after that received me unto glory,—Oh! the depth of the riches both of the knowledge and the wisdom of GOD in Christ Jesus! Yes, brethren, all this is unsearchable now. It is past our finding out now. The half

of the treasures laid up in Christ will never be known while we "see through a glass darkly." We shall only see them, and only know them, when we see Him "face to face."

iii. But further, in this new world of light, we shall be brought *face to face with ourselves*; with the history and mystery of our providential lot;—with the reason of all its changes, the end of all its trials, the design of all those lights and shadows which flitted athwart the path of our spiritual life. We shall see why GOD sent us trouble: why He fed us with the bread of adversity; why the waters of Marah were made bitter to us; why He humbled us unto tears, at the place Bochim;—and why, just as we were thinking our hill was made so strong, He hid His face from us and we were troubled. And we shall see why we were sometimes allowed to bring trouble upon ourselves;—as when we ran for shelter among the trees of the garden; or sat down in desponding mood under the shade of the juniper tree; or chafed and fretted angrily at sight of the smitten and withered gourd; or lingered on the skirts of temptation through "following Christ afar off;"—and we shall see the wondrous over-ruling of all these things, in making the failures of saints to become a means to their greater spiritual proficiency, and making them to rise the higher on account of a bewailed and pardoned fall.

And we shall be brought "*face to face*" with all our *mis-*

takes in life:—all our foolish choices; all our obstinate self-will; all our impatience to get aforehand of GOD'S purposes; all our making of doors, and forcing of doors, when our true strength would have been to "sit still." And we shall be brought "*face to face*" with the greatness of our moral dangers and temptations; shall see on what a thread our soul's life hung, and we knew it not;—how nigh we had often gone to the edge of the precipice, and some invisible power withheld us, and drew us back;—how Satan had desired to "have us that he might sift us as wheat," but that "Christ prayed for us and our faith failed not."

Yes, brethren, when the darkened glass of this time-state is removed, and we come to see every thing clearly, the marvel of all marvels to us will be how our souls were brought safe to heaven at all. As we look back upon the way we have traversed,—bristling with unnumbered difficulties and way-laid by ten thousand foes,—we shall say within ourselves,—“How my soul was preserved through all this,—how I escaped that great danger; how I maintained my integrity in that fiery trial; how I was kept from rebellion under that fretting and wearing sickness; how breach upon breach, and wave upon wave of sorrow came upon me, without my fainting or falling away,—is a mystery which angels might well desire to look into. But the ‘VEIL IS LIFTED UP.’ I can see as well as the angels now. It was all

'to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' Once I saw 'through a glass darkly,' but now 'face to face.'"

iv. "Face to face," I observe once more, in relation to our right apprehension of the *character of those who have gone before*. We shall see many in heaven whom we never expected to see :—some whom we have misjudged, by applying to them the hard and fast lines of our narrow theology ; some whom we had presumed to think unfit for the kingdom, as not coming up to our standards of vital and experimental godliness ; some, whom in very faithlessness we had given up, as beyond the reach of warning, or exhortation, or prayer. But there was more in them than we thought ;—as we shall find when we meet them "face to face." And so, in the case of many others who shall meet in that world,—some between whom bitternesses had sprung up, and unkind words had passed, and room had been left for sad family estrangements,—continuing so long as hardly to be closed up, when the grave shut its mouth upon all faults, and silenced for ever all harsh words. Oh ! how much better will these estranged and distant ones understand each other, when, in the broad sun-light of the upper world, they see one another's motives "*face to face*."

Yet more should it heighten our anticipations of the "glory to be revealed," to feel that we shall behold, "face to

face," the forms of loved earthly kindred—shall see them as they are seen, know them as they are known, love them with all the fervour of a pure, a spiritual, a sanctified and everlasting love.

True, we cannot know them again in their earthly relationships. These, pure as we may think them, are not pure enough for heaven. Still, love them we shall, and know them we shall. And to see those with whom our souls were knit together as one spirit—the parents we revered, the husband or wife we loved, the children we trained for the Lord, the brother or friend with whom we took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company,—aye, to see these, not as we saw them on earth, "through a glass, darkly," but as they are clothed in heaven's brightest, best, without spot or blemish, or any such thing—this is of a truth a soul-inspiring hope. On earth, it may be, our loved one had his *one* infirmity—a thorn in the flesh, which it cost him many watchings, and many conflicts, and many prayers, to enable him to eradicate and subdue. And now we see that this thorn was his soul's life, and he is blessing God that it was not taken away. Wherefore, let us judge nothing before the time. The world does not know us. Friends do not always know us. Often we do not know ourselves. All our knowledge, whether of ourselves or of each other, is nothing but broken, refracted, distorted cross-light. "For now we see

through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known."

Not unsuitably to the subject brought before you, more especially to that aspect of it which reminds us of our seeing "face to face" those whom we have known in the flesh, will be a reference, naturally to be expected from me on this day, to the eminent man, my gifted predecessor in this lecture, whose remains were, on Wednesday last, laid in the vaults of our metropolitan Cathedral,—laid beneath the choir which had so often rung with the thrilling tones of his living voice. Truly a great man in our Israel has fallen. "Take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again." "For all in all," I say, because I believe it was the rare combination, in him we have lost, of so many gifts—any one of which would have sufficed to have made a reputation of itself—which secured for my departed friend his long-enjoyed and unrivalled pre-eminence in the British pulpit. I believe throngs would have been attracted to his ministrations, if it had been only to listen to the proofs of his high intellectual power,—his chastened oratory, his striking originality, his keen dialectic subtlety, his fertile and exhaustless stores of imagery and illustration. Or these accomplishments might have been wanting, and yet multitudes would have been drawn to give ear to a man whose fervid earnestness, whose piercing tones, whose soul-moved and soul-

moving appeals, pierced to the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow of the awakened conscience,—making hearers to hold in their breath, as if a dying man were speaking to dying men.

Nay, we may imagine him to have lacked this most excellent gift also, yet would numbers have come,—as it was signally proved on his undertaking this Lecture they did come,—to hear him exalt in language, which the marvellous resources of his eloquence were never suffered to obscure, the grace, the love, the power, the atonement, the Divine sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. Aged saints who had long lived on the rich spiritual pasture prepared for them by the venerable and sainted Watts Wilkinson, and who had been nourished up afterwards “in the words of faith and of good doctrine” by my dear friend Canon Dale, found that whatever other elements of attractiveness, and grace, and pulpit power, might be super-added in their new Lecturer, not one jot or tittle of the Gospel of Christ was ever suffered to be left out. They came to be taught, as they had been taught before, and to be built up, as they had been built up before; and while, not less than others perhaps, riveted by the transcendent eloquence of the preacher, yet thankful to lose sight of him in his grand settings forth of Christ, as seen in the glory of His person, in the dignity of His nature, in the reach of His sacrifice, in the fulness of His clustered and

combined perfections, as the living Saviour to living men. Yes, hear what else they might, these ripe and matured Christians felt they should be sure to hear of Christ, and of what He is willing to be to all that flee to Him, and all that trust in Him. To them Christ had been long precious, as the peace of the heart, as the repose of the spirit, as the refuge of the fearful conscience, as the one all-filling, all-satisfying object upon which the thoughts of man could be exercised, or towards which the affections of man could be turned. And they found this was He whom their chosen Lecturer preached unto them. Christ in the mildness of His yoke, Christ in the sweetness of His promises, Christ in the comfort of His near presence, Christ in the sufficiency of His grace to cheer, and support, and guide—on such themes could the eloquent man be most eloquent. No wonder that, when summing up the topics of his seven years' ministrations in this pulpit, he selected a text which he wished to be considered as the Alpha and Omega of all he had ever taught, or ever wished to teach—"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Most deep and enduring, however, among the results of the late Canon Melvill's labours, will be found to be those connected with his preaching at the University. The times were peculiar, and for the cause of evangelical religion very critical, when he was first called upon to occupy that position

of what I may call terrible responsibility. Mr. Simeon was maintaining his up-hill fight against the hard, dry, stereotyped theology, which, at that time, was most in favour among University authorities, and they were few who looked encouragingly upon his efforts to quicken the dry bones into anything of spiritual life. Able, however, as Mr. Simeon was—and a man who could effect such an entire change of religious thought in the University as he did, must have been very able—he could not, from the accident of his belonging to King's College,* earn for himself those high Academical distinctions, which, as a means of influence, weigh so powerfully with the University mind. Your former Lecturer could produce these credentials. The very highest mathematical honours which the University of Cambridge can bestow had been borne off by him against all comers;† and this, combined with other distinctions of theological scholarship, at once marked him out as a man who, whatever line he might take, could not fail to have a large influence over the thoughtful and religious minds of the

* The charter of King's College originally exempted all Fellows from examination on taking their degree, thus excluding them from all the honours of the Tripos. Some years ago the College wisely obtained a repeal of their chartered privilege, and put themselves on a footing with other colleges.

† Canon Melvill was *second* wrangler; but, in the ensuing examination for Smith's prizes, usually considered to embrace a higher range of mathematical subjects, he reversed the usual relations with the senior wrangler, and was declared to be *first* Smith's prizeman.

University, especially the young among them. To the praise of the glory of that grace which he always delighted to exalt, our lamented friend took the right line. The man of strong mathematical intellect, the practised dialectician, the mighty in Biblical scholarship, the eloquent orator stood forth the champion of the truth as it is in Jesus.

His first University course, in 1836, marked the man, and proclaimed what was to be the complexion of his future teaching. Immediately the whole University did homage to him, or rather to his message. Heads of houses, far beyond their wont, evinced a desire to occupy their cushioned stalls. Tutors and graduates no longer went to the University sermon, as was sometimes the case, to offer their quit-rent tribute of example or propriety; whilst the undergraduates, following their young warm impulses, to be captivated by the earnest, and the loving, and the outspoken, and the fearless—strengthened as the appeals were by all that is glowing in poetry, vigorous in argument, felicitous in phrase—crowded with an eagerness which, I believe, the University has rarely witnessed since, to hear the man of GOD proclaim from that honoured pulpit all the words of this life. Yes, brethren, I speak that I do know, and testify that I have seen, when I tell of the strange and consentaneous alacrity with which men of all diversities of thought,—of all religious sentiments or of none,—rushed to hear the announcement of truths, to many

of them as strange as they were unwelcome, and which they would hardly have borne with patience from any other lips.

And, wherefore, as an arena of the great preacher's triumphs, do I single out, before all others, his efforts at the University? Was not the metropolis and every large town in the kingdom equally proud to welcome him? Yes, but as was well observed by an eminent professor, when speaking of Mr. Simeon, it is the awful function of one who occupies the University pulpit, "*generare patres*"—to beget fathers in Christ; to mould the minds of England's future teachers; to sow seeds of truth, which, in after generations, shall bear fruit after its kind, through the length and breadth of the land. We are sometimes oppressed with the thought, that error, and falsehood, and infidelity, have a sort of immortality—that, propagated from book to book, and from mind to mind, they seem to be clothed with the power of endless life. But, GOD be praised, truth has its attribute of immortality also; and, when proclaimed in all its fulness from the pulpit of our Universities, none can say how rapidly it shall spread, nor how far. It stimulates the intellects that are to guide intellects; it kindles the hearts which are to warm hearts; it becomes the progenitor of a long line of truth-lovers and truth-proclaimers; the ancestor of a faithful progeny of priests unto GOD.

How many young men who had listened to the strains of our friend's fervid and impassioned oratory, on leaving the University to go forth to their respective parishes, would feel that, much as the service of GOD is honoured by having consecrated to it the highest endowments of humanity, yet there is a majesty in the Gospel of the grace of GOD, when proclaimed faithfully, which is above all gifts; and that not even those of the eminent man we have lost—his genius, his poetry, his logic, all his matchless rhetoric, and all his classic fire—would have availed to the saving of a single soul, if his whole teaching had not been leavened and pervaded, through and through, with the one central and ever exalted truth, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Thus, in Canon Melvill's University preaching, was illustrated the attracting power of the cross and the emancipating power of the truth. Conscious of addressing the most august auditory in the land, he forgot not his mission. He stood up in that place to attract, but it was to attract to Christ; to win, but it was to win souls. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though GOD did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to GOD." AMEN.

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